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Abstract

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PI Name: KONIAK-GRIFFIN, DEBORAH

PI Title: PROFESSOR

Project Title: PREVENTING HIV/AIDS IN TEEN MOTHERS AND THEIR PARTNERS

Abstract: *Adolescent mothers are at risk for acquiring HIV/AIDS through heterosexual sex. Their intimate partners are often teen fathers who engage in multiple HIV risk behaviors, including sexual behaviors, illicit drug use, and needle-sharing for body-piercing and tattoos. Many have a history of gang involvement and incarceration. Being in a monogamous relationship and fear of negative partner attitudes have been identified as important barriers to condom use for adolescent mothers. Yet, preliminary studies indicate that 1) young fathers do not perceive sexual activity outside their main relationship to conflict with their monogamous status; and 2) a 50 percent break-up rate within 12 months is reported for parenting adolescent couples. Despite teens' misperceptions about relationship stability, current romantic connections may provide the key to building skills needed to maintain safer sex with current and future partners. The exclusion of male partners from scientifically evaluated HIV prevention programs represents a serious research gap. This experimental study will evaluate the impact of a program attended by parenting adolescent couples on their safer sex practices. The sample of 286 couples will be composed of high-risk, predominantly Latino youth. Recruited from alternative schools in Los Angeles County, couples will be randomly assigned to the experimental or control condition. The experimental condition consists of a 12-hour HIV prevention program presented in 6 sessions. The curriculum, based on the CDC model "Be Proud! Be Responsible!" is adapted and expanded for the targeted population by using feelings of maternal protectiveness and paternal responsibility to promote safer sexual behaviors. Activities include small group discussions in combined and gender-separated groups, interactive games, skill-building exercises (conflict and sexual negotiation, condom use),*

and a presentation by an HIV- positive mother. Cultural issues related to gender and power are addressed throughout. The control condition is a 1-hour AIDS education session (videotape followed by a short discussion period). The programs will be offered in community-based settings (e.g., recreational facilities and libraries). Participants will be evaluated on primary outcomes (sexual risk behaviors) and intermediate outcomes (social cognitive factors related to HIV prevention) through individual interviews at baseline, immediately post-intervention, and at 3-, 6-, and 12- month follow-up. It is hypothesized that by addressing issues of gender and power while providing social-cognitive skill-building learning experiences within the context of a romantic relationship, sexual risk-taking will be reduced in adolescent mothers and fathers.

Thesaurus Terms:

AIDS education /prevention, adolescence (12-18), parent, sex behavior, sex partner African American, Hispanic American, behavioral /social science research tag, human subject

Institution: UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA LOS ANGELES
405 HILGARD AVE
LOS ANGELES, CA 90024

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